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CULTURE

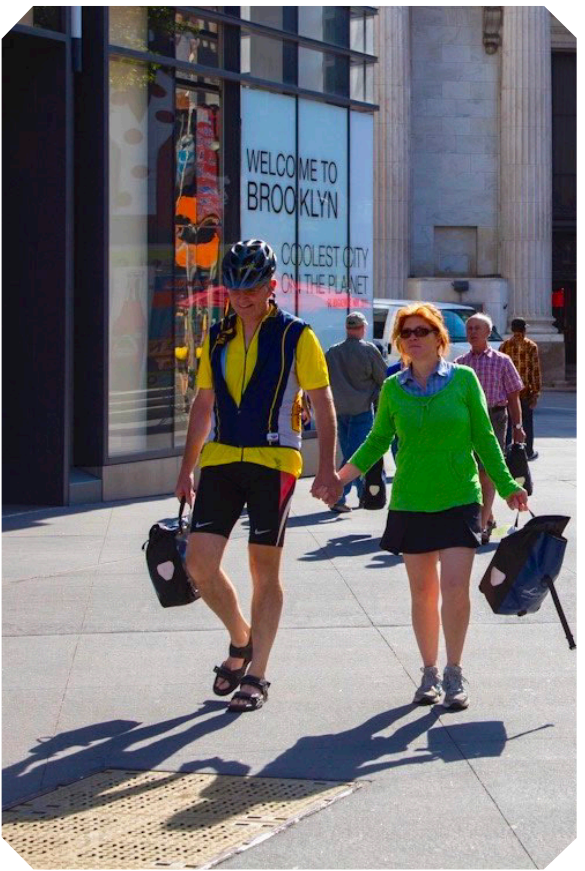
DOWNTOWN BROOKLYN IS...

In 1939, the writer James Agee reported, “Brooklyn Is: Southeast of the Island.” Temporarily living in an apartment in Clinton Hill, he spent that year’s winter and spring surveying the borough’s neighborhoods and talking to its residents. What he found, and crafted into a lyrical 10,000-word essay, was a place full of life – unique perspectives born of the diverse backgrounds of immigrants; an industrial waterfront that spawned hard work and businesses whose products were desired across the globe; surprises and discoveries around nearly every corner.

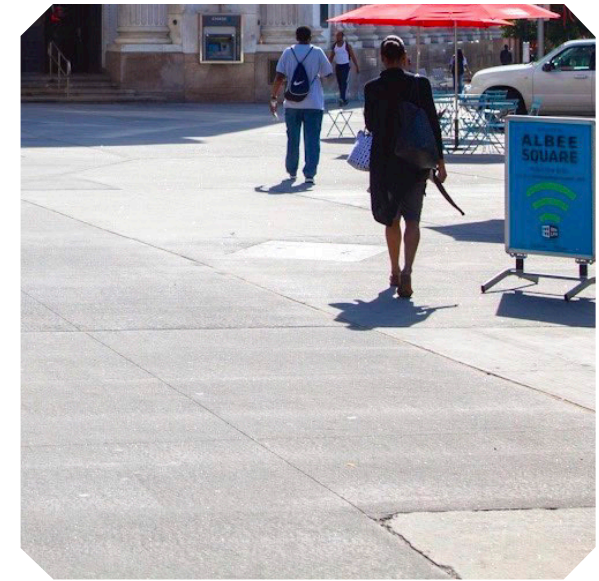
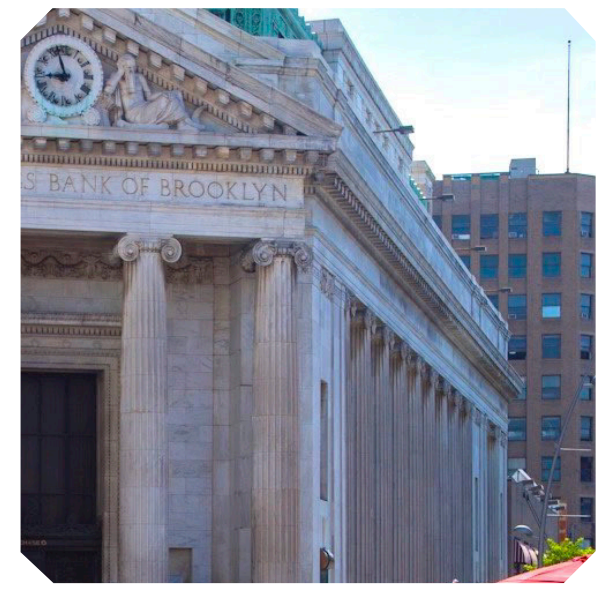
Seventy-five years later, the borough remains southeast of an island, but Brooklyn is now the center of attention. It has captured the imagination of nations and cities around the world, and done so by demonstrating the promise of the long-held values that Agee saw on the streets years ago. Those values – inclusivity, character, integrity, community, imagination, innovation, grit – are still displayed by the people of Brooklyn, whether a third-generation resident in a brownstone or a recent college graduate who just arrived with a few brown boxes and a dream. The borough’s motto is not simply a tag line, it is an embodiment of what it means to be a Brooklynite: *Eendraght Maeckt Maght* – unity makes strength.

As an area that is in the midst of its own dramatic changes, Downtown Brooklyn is a microcosm of the borough. Retail businesses along Flatbush have been joined by innovative corporations in MetroTech, and by technology and design startups in the Navy Yard. Brownstones in Fort Greene are now steps away from new high-rise towers. These new additions are happening for many reasons – great access to transportation, rich educational opportunities, an effective public sector, and the concerted work of hundreds – but importantly it is happening because the residents of the area have also fostered the values of the borough by growing a place that is a devoted home for arts and culture.

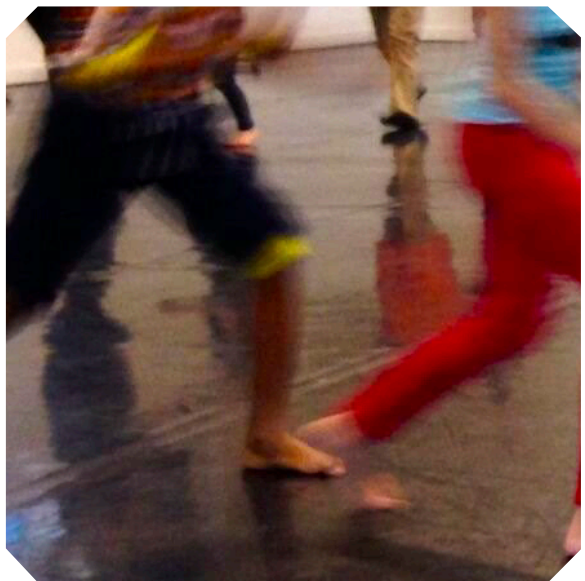
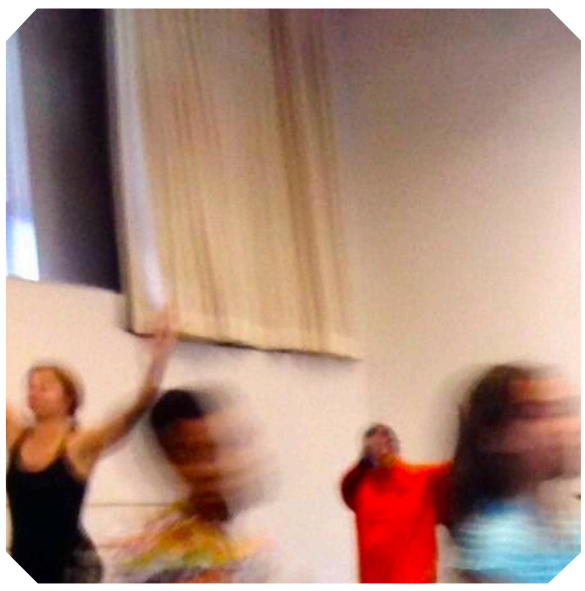
Downtown Brooklyn is a place where the ideas that epitomize the spirit of Brooklyn today are blossoming. As stakeholders, stewards and members of a community, there is a shared responsibility to uphold the history of the area, and to allow the next generation to expand what is possible here.



Credit: Downtown Brooklyn Partnership



THIS PLAN



Credit: Mark Morris Dance Group

Culture Forward captures Downtown Brooklyn at an inflection point: buildings are rising, new residents are arriving, and the Brooklyn Cultural District is formalizing its long-term status. The moment provides a time to take stock of the assets created by an incredible past and to look forward purposefully.

The City and State of New York have invested over \$100 million in Downtown Brooklyn to create world-class cultural venues. This investment is not made in a vacuum, nor was it intended to create culture from scratch; instead it builds on the area's rich history of cultural contributions and infrastructure of existing institutions. The resulting Brooklyn Cultural District sends a clear signal of the immense value of culture to Downtown Brooklyn, and that its stakeholders are capable of thinking and executing big ideas.

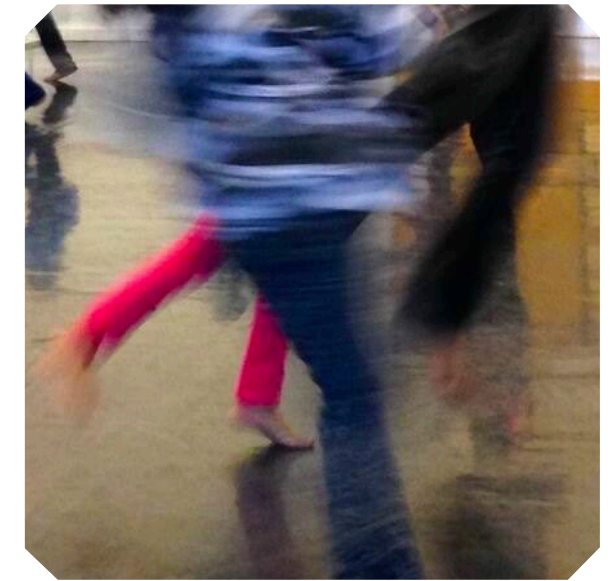
This plan is an acknowledgement of our joint success in creating a world-class cultural district, and that what the area needs now is to purposefully focus on building the connective tissue to support and further this success. The thirteen initiatives in this plan will ensure Downtown Brooklyn fully realizes its potential cultural impact, and in turn that its cultural ecosystem fully supports the area's creativity, residents, and economy.

This plan was generated by a collaborative effort of the Downtown Brooklyn Partnership (DBP), the Downtown Brooklyn Arts Alliance (DBAA), a group of diverse stakeholders that was convened in the summer of 2015, and a series of further meetings during fall 2015 and winter 2016. Over the course of the plan's creation, we consulted with over 50 stakeholders – Downtown Brooklyn cultural organizations, residents, workers, elected officials, businesses, and many others – and we spoke with countless others about the potential this plan might hold for the future of the area.

The conversations and discussions that have informed this plan have underscored the fact that this is a place with lived values, and if we are to be truly successful, the plan's initiatives must be based on those same principles. These include:

▶ **Community & character** – Communities comprise people, businesses and other organizations, and physical spaces. This means that communities are not static, though many communities in this neighborhood have an important history that new members should work to understand and respect, while long-time members should work to share and adapt.

- ▶ **Equity & inclusivity** – All residents, business owners, employees, and even visitors to the area, both current and future, should be able to participate in the ongoing development of this community to the extent they choose, including a full range of choices of where to live, work, and play. Downtown Brooklyn must continue to be a home for a wide range of diverse peoples from many socioeconomic backgrounds.
- ▶ **Access to artistic expression** – Members of the community should be provided with a voice and pathways to varied forms of expression.



- ▶ **Pursuit of excellence** – In short, all members of the community should aim to make this the best place it can be – ensuring people are treated honestly and with respect, that work here is done with our best efforts, and that opportunities are available for lifelong learning.
- ▶ **Intelligent, contextual design & use** – The area should be an exemplar of high-quality design, architecture, and use that is both responsive to the existing contexts, and an imaginative model that other cities around the world can follow. This is a special place – its physical expression and the available mix of programming should reflect this.
- ▶ **Innovation & edginess** – The community aspires to develop new, creative work with a unique voice. It is a place for risk-taking: imagination is prized; personal style is treasured; excitement is revered.

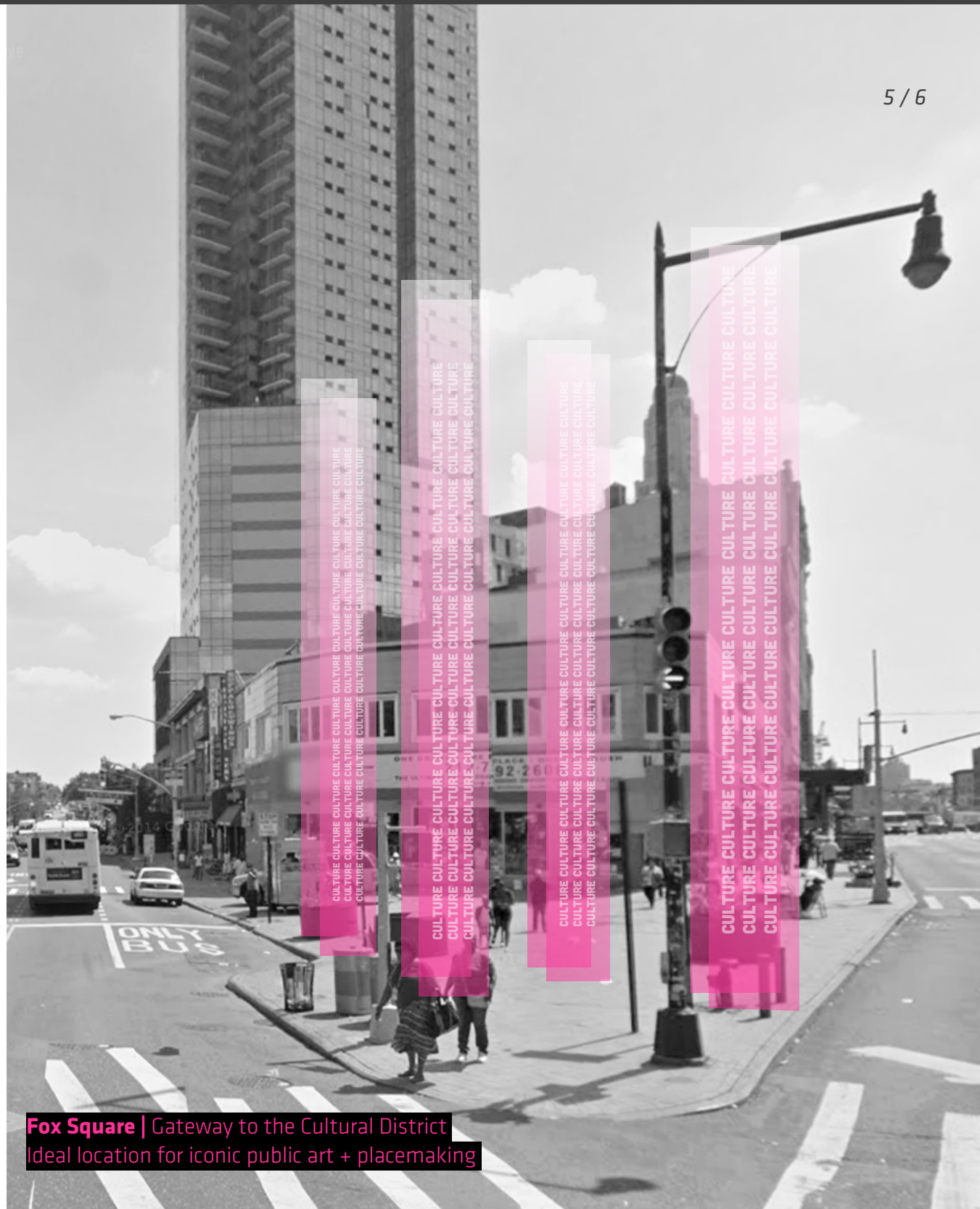
The manifestation of these values will be different depending on whether one is an artist, resident, or real estate developer, yet they are rooted in the same common cause: helping to ensure that Downtown Brooklyn is the city’s heart of creativity and culture.

In short: *the goal of Culture Forward is to build on the area’s identity as captured in these values, taking advantage of the current cultural, business, and residential development in order to ensure the equitable inclusion of all people in a unique creative community that empowers artistic endeavors and reflects Brooklyn and New York City.*

In order to accomplish the creation of this sustainable cultural infrastructure, there are four identified areas of focus in this plan:

- ▶ **Promoting Opportunities for Artists, Arts Groups, and Future Arts Leaders**
- ▶ **Animating Public Space**
- ▶ **Signaling the Area as a Hub for Creativity and Innovation**
- ▶ **Providing Appropriate Resources and Governance**

These are expanded below, with detailed initiatives identified for each.



Fox Square | Gateway to the Cultural District
Ideal location for iconic public art + placemaking

Credit: Google Earth



BAM Lot 31 Lafayette Avenue | City-owned lot in the heart of the cultural district
Could be transformed into nearly 14,000 sq ft of artist studio space

Credit: Fiedler Marciano Architecture

Promoting Opportunities for Artists Arts Groups, + Future Arts Leaders

Rising rents and other increased costs have created a situation where it is difficult for the creative and cultural community to continue to work and live in New York City. While this is not new, Brooklyn was once a respite from this constant battle. As the borough's popularity has soared, however, artists here have been plunged back into the struggle. While increasing access to affordable housing is a top priority for all New Yorkers and for the De Blasio administration, it is vitally important for New York's artists, who often miss opportunities to access affordable housing because of a lack of information and understanding of the application process.

Downtown Brooklyn aims to be a real, long-term home for arts and culture. Many of the area's arts organizations are investing in artists and their work already; these initiatives revolve around augmenting those efforts to ensure that artists can maximize their opportunities, creating a place where art is not only presented but made.

These initiatives provide critical benefits that allow the area to be a place where the production and the consumption of culture can co-exist and support one another.

There are many symbiotic benefits, not least of which is generating increased animation of venues and public spaces.

Just as in other walks of life, artists enjoy great benefits when able to live and work in close proximity. It contributes to the development of a closer community, and a freer exchange of ideas and methods. There is impact in clustering, and as creative people and creative industries locate near others like them, the arts will lead the way here in Downtown Brooklyn. This will not only benefit artists. Artists and creative workers provide over \$20 billion of economic impact to New York City each year, a significant economic benefit. 25% of the innovation economy jobs in the Brooklyn Tech Triangle are in the arts. This plan seeks to ensure that number only increases.

Importantly, these initiatives seek to embrace all artists and those in creative professions - from young artists who are just launching their careers, onward through the arc of their professional lives - and seek to ensure that artist involvement fully reflects the diversity of the neighborhood and the city.

Our ambition is to drive these developments in directions that expand access to opportunity, respecting the area's historic arts community, and also providing for regular infusion of new talent.

INITIATIVE 1
Developing affordable artist workspaces to ensure artists can work and produce locally

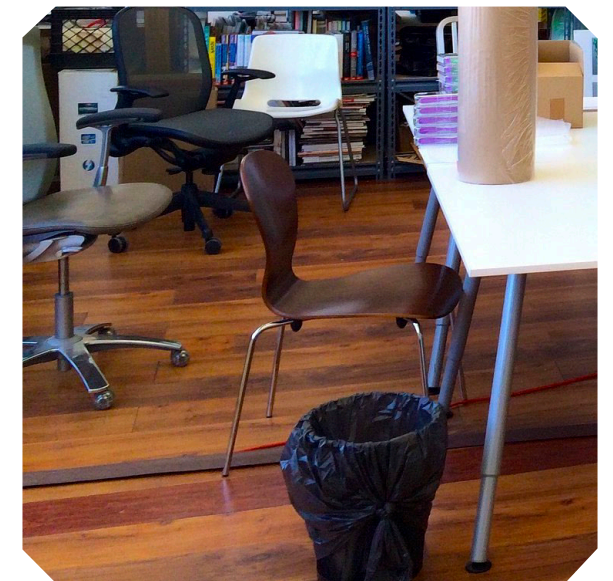
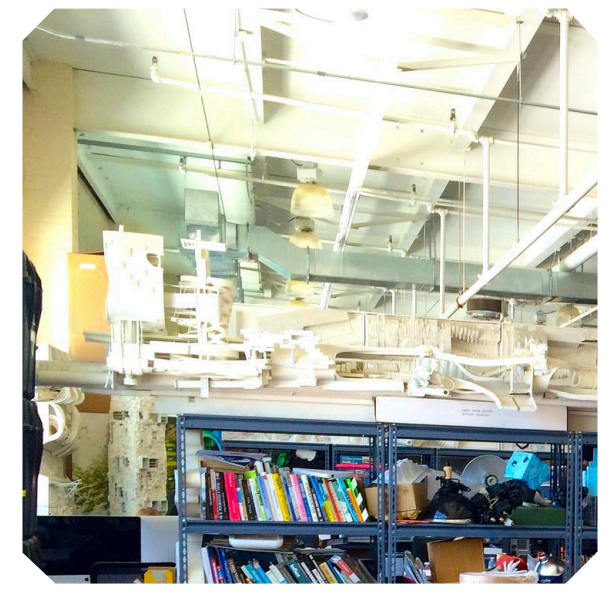


Recent cultural capital projects in Downtown Brooklyn have produced a series of stunning state-of-the-art venues that have made the area one of the great centers of cultural programming in the city. Yet this is not the end: further work is needed to ensure appropriate, long-term provision of space for the creation of art, not just its presentation and consumption. Studio space, rehearsal rooms, even simple meeting rooms are still in short supply. This initiative seeks to focus on providing longer-term workspaces for two purposes:

1. Studios for visual artists that can be occupied for at least six month terms (and hopefully longer), with individual spaces of at least 250 square feet; and
2. Rehearsal spaces for performing groups that can be used for a variety of purposes – workshopping new ideas, holding readings, and having a stable place for creating and developing exciting new work.

To execute this initiative, we will need to be creative and identify committed partners in both the public and private sectors. Currently two immediate opportunities exist to repurpose underused City-owned spaces and vacant land:

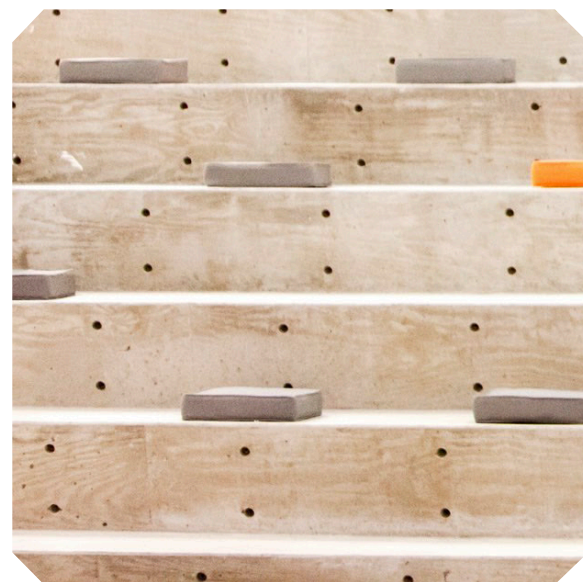
- ▶ The upper floors of the Brooklyn Bridge Park administrative building at 334 Furman Street, where 15,000 square feet of space is unused. The building’s layout and ample natural light make it an ideal location for both performance and visual art studios. Furthermore, its dramatic location within one of the world’s great parks, one that has demonstrated strong support in its public programming for both visual and performing arts, would send a significant signal as to the importance of working artists within our community.
- ▶ The vacant lot currently playing host to a Kaws mural and bike rack commissioned by BAM at 31 Lafayette Avenue. Its location within the heart of the Brooklyn Cultural District makes this a unique opportunity for the City, which owns the space, to push for the creation of affordable studio spaces amid some of New York’s most iconic cultural institutions.



Credit: Fantástica

“ART IS NOT WHAT YOU SEE, BUT WHAT YOU MAKE OTHERS SEE.”

EDGAR DEGAS



Credit: BRIC

Both of these opportunities will require the coordination of our elected officials and several City agencies, and appropriate partners will need to be identified to fund, develop, and operate the facilities once complete. Fortunately, there are numerous organizations within the Brooklyn Cultural District with deep experience in venue operations and incubating artistic talent.

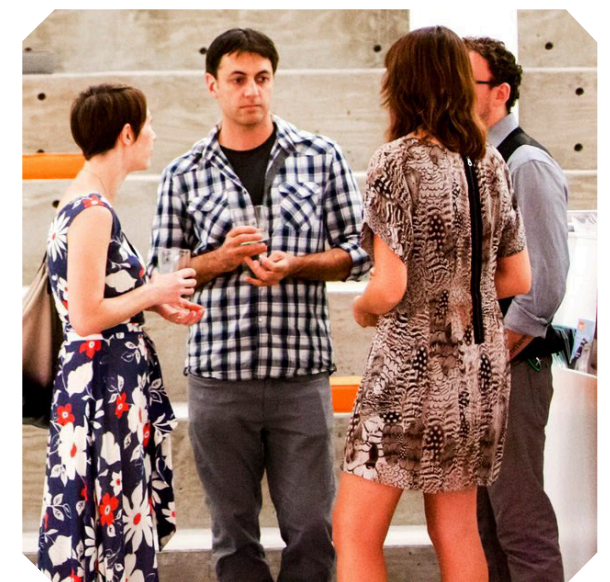
We will also work with the private sector, as the government alone cannot satiate the immense demand for affordable studio space. To do so we will advocate for means that will incentivize the private sector to aid in reaching these goals:

- ▶ Changes in the zoning code to allow for cultural uses to be exempted from a project’s allowable Floor-Area Ratio (FAR) or for FAR bonuses to be awarded for the inclusion of such a use, as is the case with plazas or public spaces throughout the city.
- ▶ Amending the definition of “community facility” use standards to better align with the types of uses that more closely enable creative endeavors – like artist workspace – and eliminating uses that can pay market-rate rents.

- ▶ Working with property owners and elected officials to include affordable studio space in development plans for sites that will undergo a Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP) within or in close proximity to the Brooklyn Cultural District.

There is no one solution to solve this problem, and given the complexities and investment required, a broad coalition will be needed to advance this agenda.

- ▶ **Partners / Stakeholders:** Developers or other funders, NYC workspace initiatives (Spaceworks, Artist Studio Affordability Project), local politicians
- ▶ **Required Resources:** Zoning bonuses, redefinition of land use codes, land provision



INITIATIVE 2
Ensuring artists have access to affordable housing

Mayor De Blasio has pledged the creation of 1,500 units of dedicated artist housing. We see an opportunity not only to better educate and spread awareness of the current opportunities for artists to secure affordable housing, but more importantly, to expand the opportunities available to artists to help meet the Mayor's goal. This can be done in three steps:



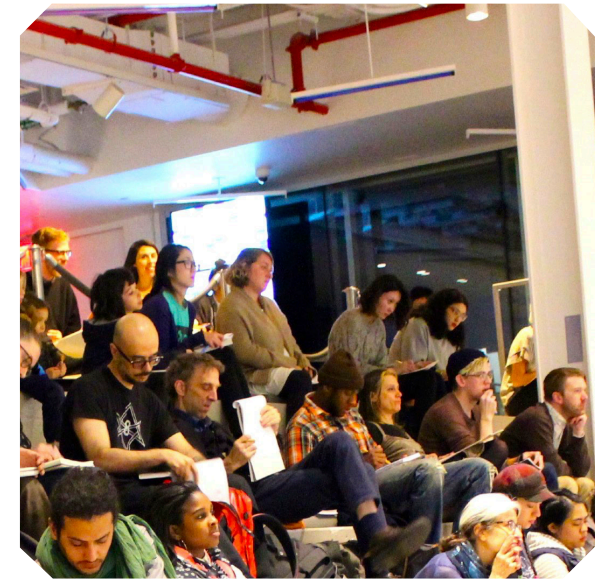
Credit: BRIC

1. Highlight the Current Opportunity: Artist-Specific Affordable Housing Seminars

Applying for affordable housing in New York is a complex process to navigate, requiring long-term planning by individuals, especially those – like artists – who need to document episodic and fluctuating income. This initiative will educate and prepare artists through sessions uniquely designed for and marketed to them, in which experts provide guidance through the numerous steps of New York's affordable housing application process. The goal is to increase artist applicants and improve their ability to access affordable housing in New York.

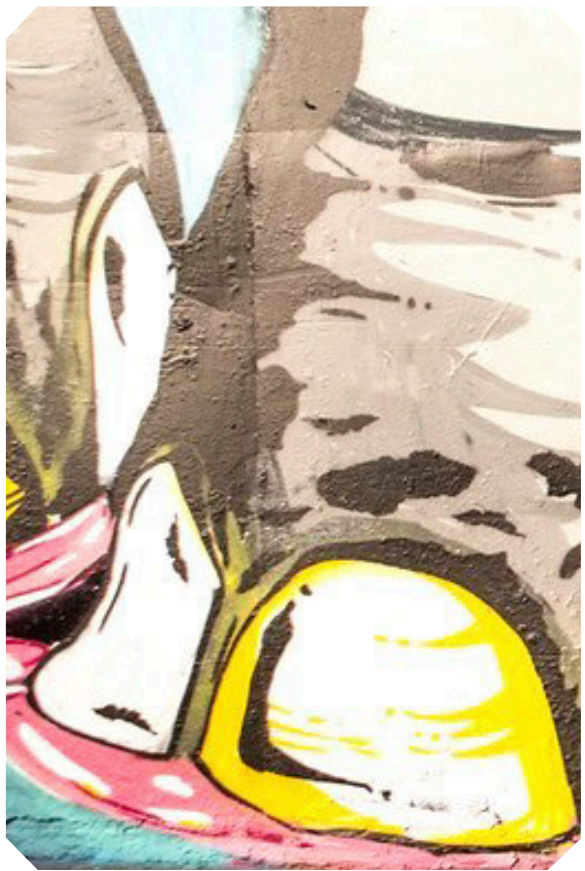
This program will be led by the Actors Fund, which has worked tirelessly to promote affordable housing for artists, in coordination with the Downtown Brooklyn Partnership, which will ensure both the artist and real estate communities are actively involved.

- ▶ **Initiative Lead:** The Actors Fund
- ▶ **Partners / Stakeholders:** DBP, housing developers



“I GO WHERE THE ARTISTS ARE.”

STEVE HINDY



Credit: Downtown Brooklyn Partnership

2. Enhance The Current Opportunity: Allow Artist Preference in Affordable Housing

Specific preferences are permitted by the City in affordable housing developments. While federal and state law allows for the provision of housing preferences to artists, New York City does not, and this must change for the administration to reach its stated goal. We will first lend our voice to advocating with the City for artists to be allowed as a preferred group in affordable housing, and then we will work with developers towards the goal of assigning 10% of total available affordable units for artists in areas where the development is in proximity to other cultural uses. If accomplished, this could create nearly 400 affordable units, nearly one-third of the Mayor’s goal, for artists in Downtown Brooklyn alone.

- ▶ **Initiative Lead:** DBP
- ▶ **Partners / Stakeholders:** DBAA members, City politicians, private developers
- ▶ **Required Resources:** Advocacy

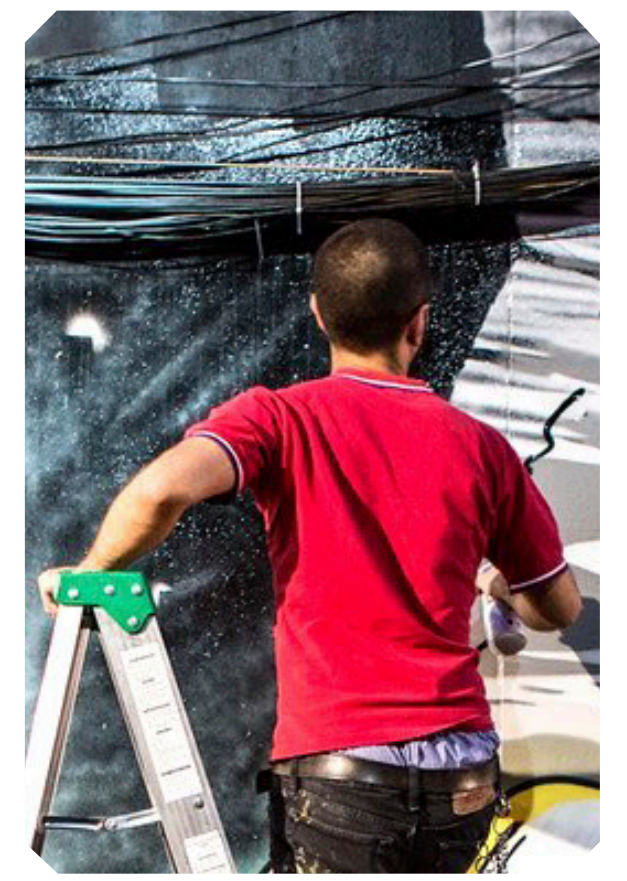
3. Create New Opportunity: Develop Live/Work Artist Housing In Downtown Brooklyn

The Downtown Brooklyn area should be a central place to push forward the Mayor’s commitment to affordable live/work spaces for artists.

A unique opportunity presents itself on Fort Greene Place, where MoCADA has acquired a site across from BAM Park, and is seeking to partner with a developer to create live/work space for artists. This MoCADA-partnered project would potentially provide up to 10,000 square feet of additional live/work space in the area, or some combination of the two.

For this to become a reality, MoCADA will need strong, committed support from both the public and private sectors, including, but not limited to, technical guidance, development assistance, dedicated funding and operations expertise. While a significant challenge, this project is an ideal complement to the community and larger Brooklyn Cultural District.

- ▶ **Initiative Lead:** DBP
- ▶ **Partners / Stakeholders:** MoCADA; City politicians; NYCEDC, Department of Housing, Preservation & Development; private developers

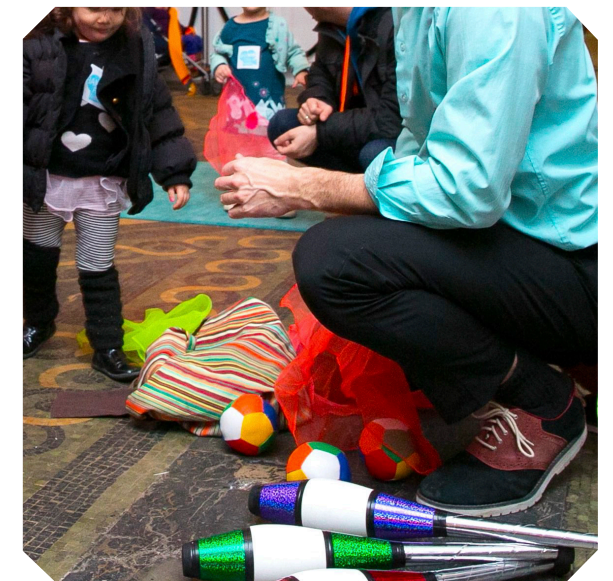


INITIATIVE 3
Offering holistic support to ensure artists can succeed fully within the area

This initiative seeks to promote organized opportunities for artists and creative workers to access new information about public and private services (beyond housing information); network with one another in dedicated forums; and otherwise develop their creative practice through educational seminars, programs, and workshops. Many organizations in the area already provide programs of this nature, offering artists long-term support and helping to reinforce and ensure other investments in their careers are maximized. This initiative would target two projects to help to support their efforts:

1. The creation of a full inventory of these programs to be inputted into a consolidated, online resource that ensures existing – and future – programs are featured and accessible to artists and creative workers
2. The development of an annual “summit,” in partnership with the Brooklyn Arts Council, DBAA, and Brooklyn Education Innovation Network (BE.IN) – a physical gathering that would be dedicated to important topics for artists, and further link them to ongoing programs. Possible summit topics might include managing small businesses, accounting, contract development and digital marketing, all with the expressed goal of providing the skills necessary to support their artistic endeavors.

- ▶ **Initiative Lead:** DBP
- ▶ **Partners / Stakeholders:** DBAA, City agencies, foundations, BE.IN (an alliance of the ten higher education institutions within Downtown Brooklyn)
- ▶ **Required Resources:** funding, educational resources, facilitators



Credit: BAM



INITIATIVE 4

Building the future arts leaders of tomorrow through cultural fellowships

A group of Downtown Brooklyn arts organizations is currently developing a multi-organization, paid, one-year fellowship program that would provide a unique portal into the field of arts management for new college graduates from underrepresented groups. This program would provide a select number of new graduates with focused work experience, skills building, mentorship, and new connections through formal activities and informal gatherings.

Rotating through this year-long program, these young people will gain exposure to multiple cultural organizations, as well as a broad set of experiences across departments within the arts. Because the organizations are in close geographic proximity, it is expected that deep connections will develop among the fellows and professional development opportunities and regular networking will be easily facilitated.

Over the long-term, this initiative would aim to develop a more diverse talent pipeline to arts organizations, creating a new generation of leaders committed to diversity and equity and starting a ripple effect throughout the New York City arts and culture community.

This initiative would be managed by the participating cultural organizations, with cooperation in recruitment and retention of the fellows by local colleges and universities.

- ▶ **Initiative Lead:** Participating cultural organizations - BRIC, Mark Morris Dance Group, MoCADA, and Theatre for a New Audience
- ▶ **Partners / Stakeholders:** BE.IN
- ▶ **Required Resources:** Fellowship funding, office space, staff capacity for mentorship

“TO ENCOURAGE LITERATURE AND THE ARTS IS A DUTY WHICH EVERY GOOD CITIZEN OWES TO HIS COUNTRY.”

GEORGE WASHINGTON



Credit: BRIC

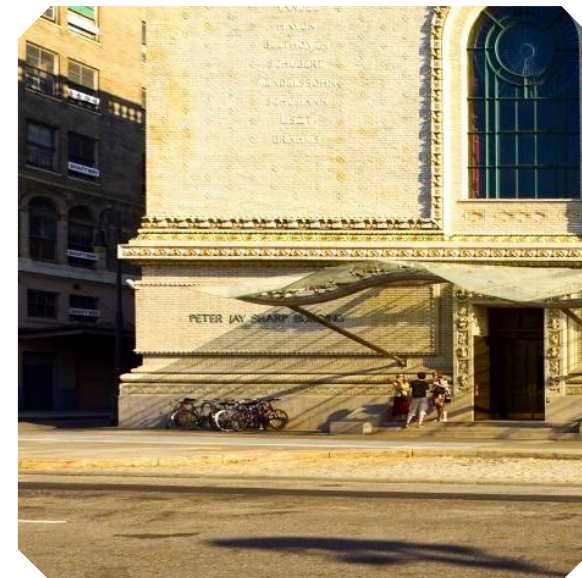


INITIATIVE 5
Building a framework for inter-board sharing and learning

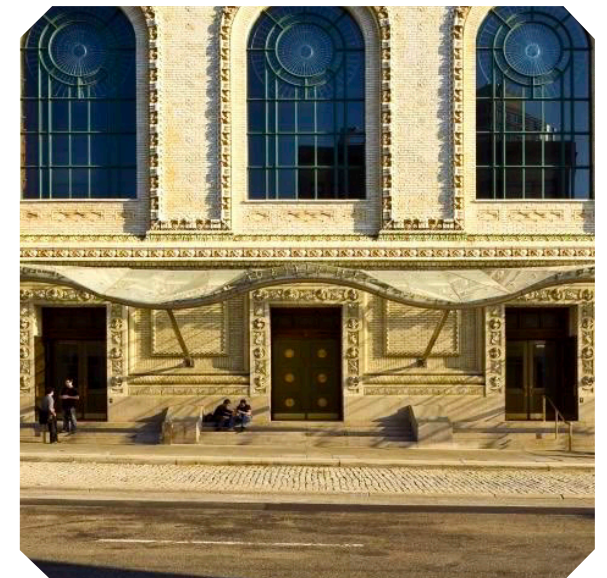
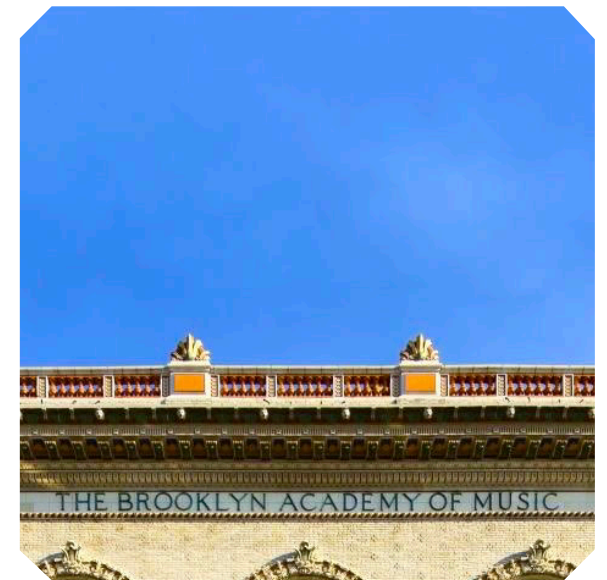
The Downtown Brooklyn Arts Alliance has provided an opportunity for the staffs of more than thirty arts and cultural organizations in the area to gather and exchange information. There is a further opportunity for the boards of the over sixty cultural organizations in the area to gather to share and learn from their collective experience. Given the wide variety of organizations represented – from BAM’s 150 years of history in the area to new organizations just emerging in workspace at 80 Hanson Place – a structured means of knowledge sharing would help to promote a stronger overall ecosystem.

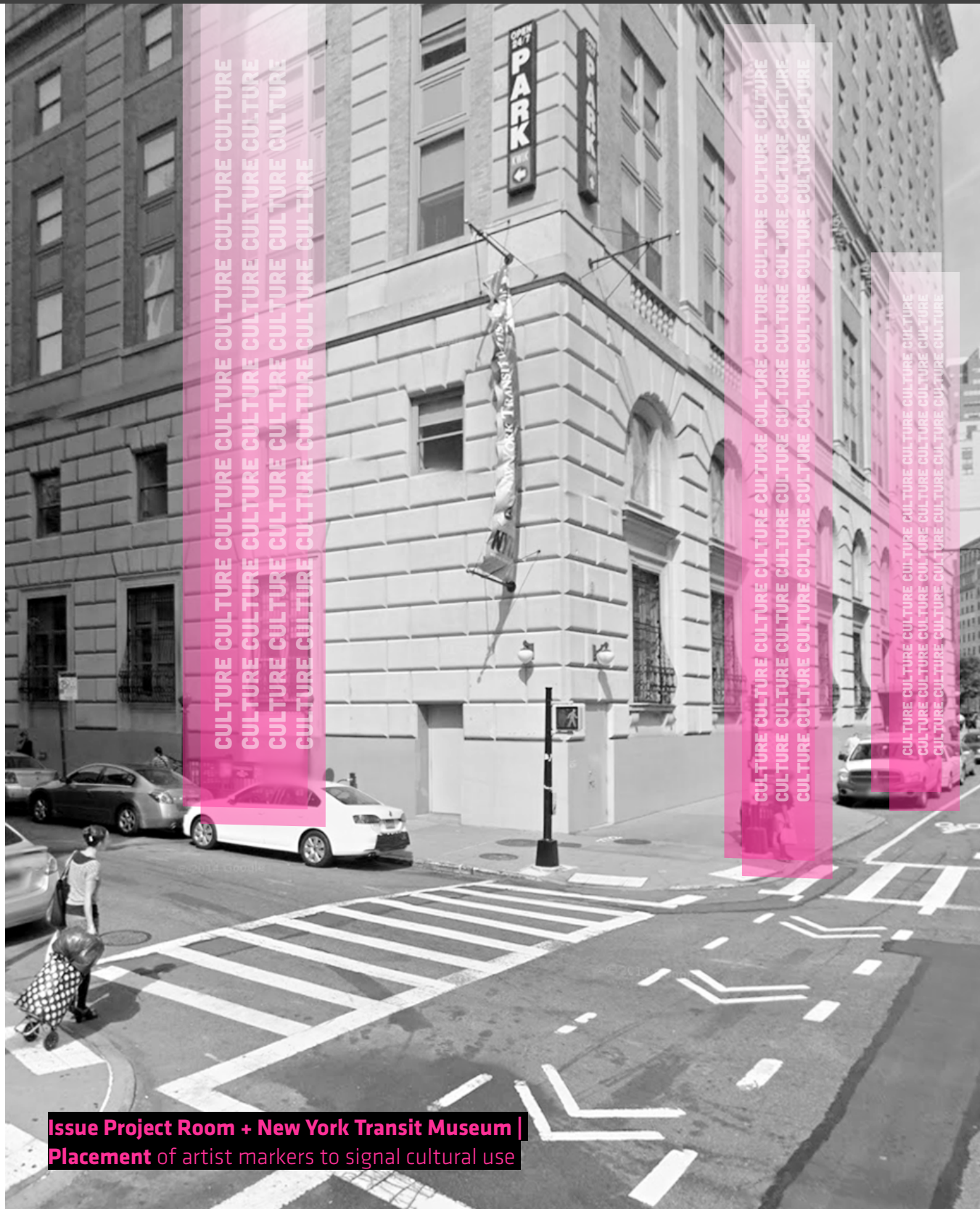
Beginning with an initial series of bi-annual lunches organized by the DBAA, this initiative would, over time, aim to provide an organized mentoring system, where members of the boards of larger organizations would work with members of smaller boards to ensure a wide and informed perspective on governing decisions. This could also lead to increased collaboration as board members are exposed to and understand the missions of new organizations.

- ▶ **Initiative Lead:** DBAA
- ▶ **Partners / Stakeholders:** cultural organizations throughout Downtown Brooklyn, elected officials
- ▶ **Required Resources:** funding, sponsors, capacity



Credit: BAM





Issue Project Room + New York Transit Museum | Placement of artist markers to signal cultural use

Credit: Fantástica

Animating Public Space

The Downtown Brooklyn area does not lack for public space. The heart of the Cultural District is privileged to be the subject of a \$3 million plan to create a more cohesive streetscape; there are revitalized parks and plazas coming online alongside new construction, as well as improved lighting, wayfinding, and seating. These initiatives look at this open space broadly across the area – not just at these new plazas being created, but also within the Brooklyn Strand initiative, in area parks, within public housing, and other spaces nearby, and take into account lessons from other global examples of successful programs to ensure use reflects the diversity of the area’s residents and workers.

At the same time, the Downtown Brooklyn area is blessed with a street-level culture that includes extraordinary art, food and music. This, when combined with the area’s generous sidewalks and plazas and access to transportation, creates the baseline fabric needed for a thriving community.

What is left to do is to plug these cultural elements into the new spaces, continuing to link people to an active urban life and bringing about more engaged neighbors and visitors who more fully understand the many creative opportunities in the area.

Programming public space within Downtown Brooklyn requires both an understanding of the available space and need, and the provision of resources that allow artists to showcase their talents in those places. Programming that results from these initiatives does not need to be expensive or complicated, but it does need to be reflective of all New Yorkers – and importantly, normalize their presence in the area to encourage positive interactions with a diverse array of people.

These initiatives seek to make the area a regular home for publicly-displayed art quite unlike anywhere else in New York, providing a notable example that could be the core of artistic exchange with other cities around the globe.



Credit: BAM

INITIATIVE 6

Developing a comprehensive plan to infuse the area with public art



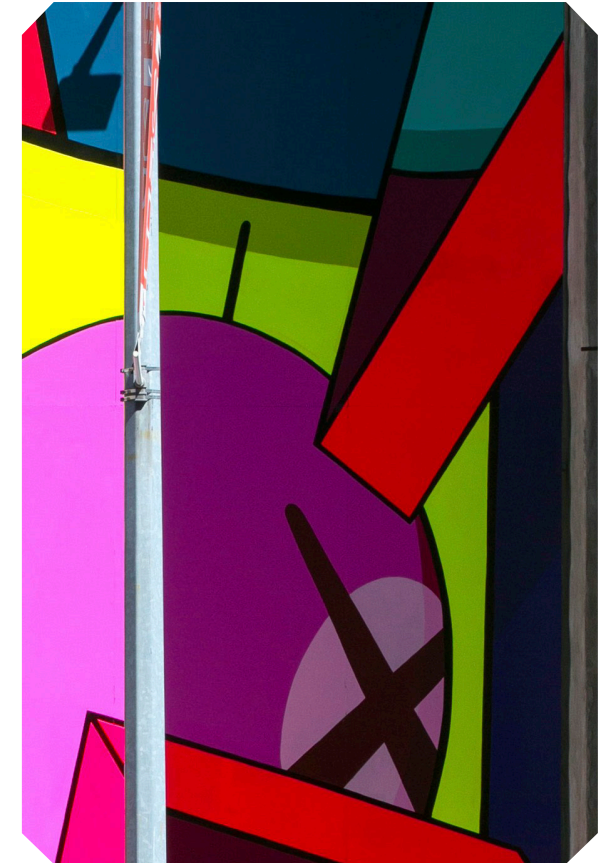
This initiative will create a plan that will link areas throughout greater Downtown Brooklyn through the installation of public art. This will include commissions from notable artists, as well as pieces produced by emerging artists from the local community, which would work to demonstrate the area's diversity and breadth of experience. The art should not, however, simply focus on a static end, but should also serve as community building exercises, temporary opportunities to enliven forgotten corners, and a means to link neighborhoods together.

This initiative will be led by the DBP, coordinating work with existing efforts by local Business Improvement Districts, with advice from the DBAA throughout, including representation from its members on planning and selection panels. The initiative would also be served by consulting with public stakeholders and other area organizations that have experience in this field including the Municipal Art Society, Two Trees, Brooklyn Bridge Park, and Forest City Ratner Companies.

- ▶ **Initiative Lead:** DBP
- ▶ **Partners / Stakeholders:** DBAA member organizations (especially those working in the visual arts), local BIDs, area artists
- ▶ **Required Resources:** Funds for art commissioning and/or collaboration with public art presenting organizations



Credit: BAM

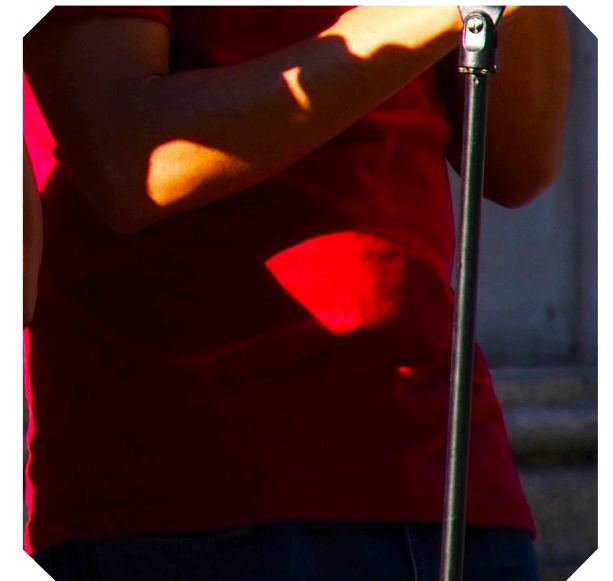
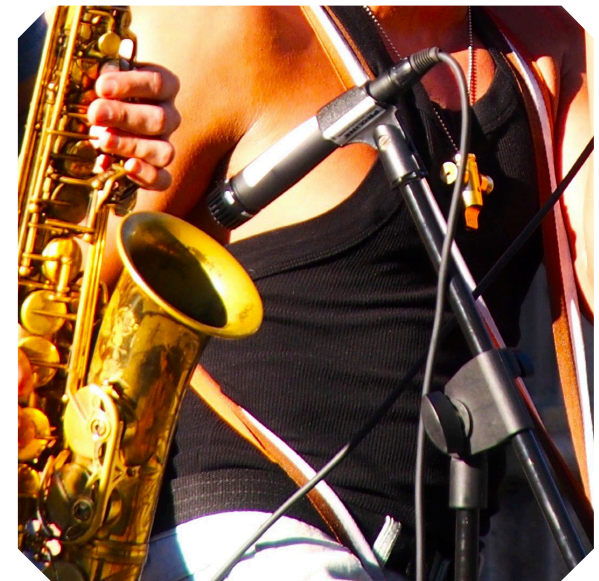


INITIATIVE 7
Staging regular performances within public spaces

This initiative would work with local arts organizations and area artists to build a database of potential artists and performers that could be scheduled in the spaces, and then schedule public spaces with artists to show off the creative performers in the area. This could involve, in particular, participatory art and family programs, especially on the weekends.

This initiative will also be led by the DBP, coordinating work with existing efforts by local Business Improvement Districts, with advice from the DBAA throughout, including representation from its members on planning and selection panels.

- ▶ **Initiative Lead:** DBP
- ▶ **Partners / Stakeholders:** DBAA member organizations (especially those working in the performing arts), local BIDs, area artists
- ▶ **Required Resources:** Stipend for artists; staff capacity for scheduling; stage technology & set-up; producer(s)



Credit: Downtown Brooklyn Partnership



INITIATIVE 8

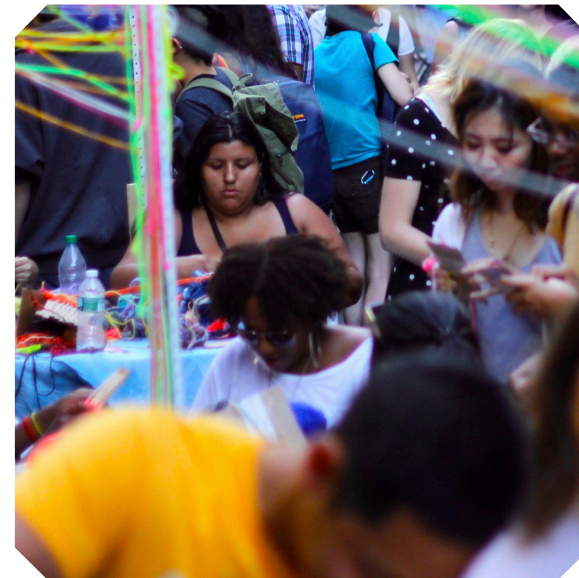
Cultivating broad, ongoing, engaged participation and collaboration through the creation of an area festival

Downtown Brooklyn is home to over 60 cultural organizations that are striking in their diversity. From large-scale, state-of-the-art theaters and presenters to three-person production shops working in a walk-up, no other area in the city can lay claim to such a wide array of cultural groups. This presents an exciting opportunity to engage with the broader Downtown Brooklyn community through the establishment of an annual festival. The broad existing cultural programming from organizations in the area provides an opportunity to create a coordinated “open house” or an annual “best of” weekend – spreading the area’s finest work, while minimizing the need for new production costs. This would also provide a framework for the area’s organizations to find new contexts in which to work together and partner on other initiatives, such as holiday programming, while parallel “open studios” could allow new artist voices to be heard. This initiative could be especially important for smaller organizations looking for opportunities and a means to expand their reach.

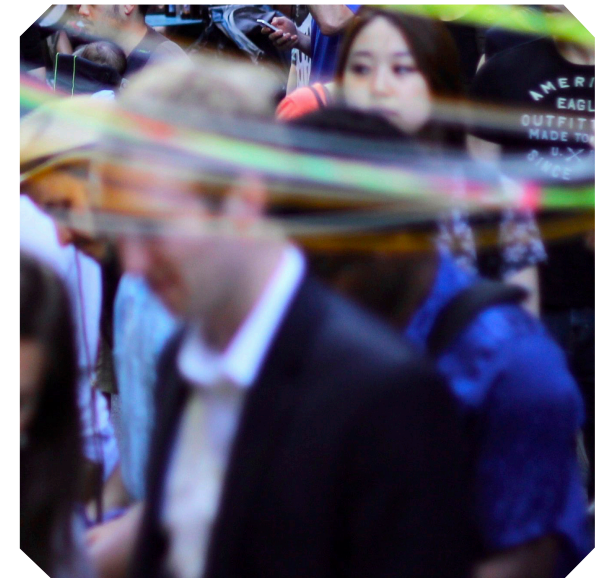
Beginning with small, focused events and discounts, much along the lines of a “First Saturday,” the program could evolve into a much larger event encompassing not only Downtown Brooklyn but also unite groups further into Brooklyn, providing an opportunity for continued collaboration for cultural groups across the borough.

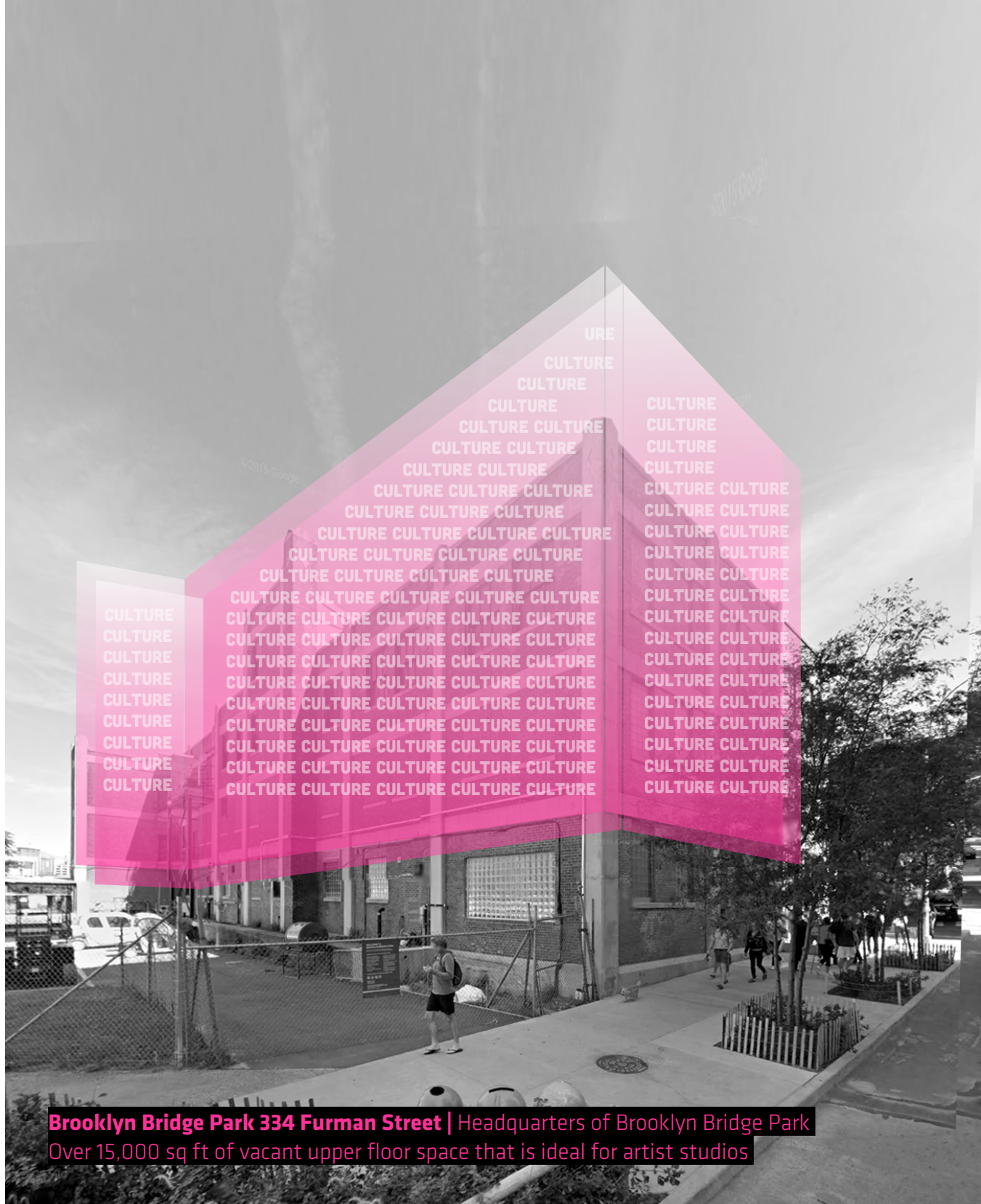
This initiative will be jointly coordinated by the DBAA, who would assist in disseminating information to its member organizations about scheduling, planning and branding for the event, and the DBP, who would assist with providing coordination for the Festival and marketing and communications.

- ▶ **Initiative Lead:** DBP
- ▶ **Partners / Stakeholders:** DBAA and its members
- ▶ **Required Resources:** Staff capacity; funding for festival



Credit: Downtown Brooklyn Partnership





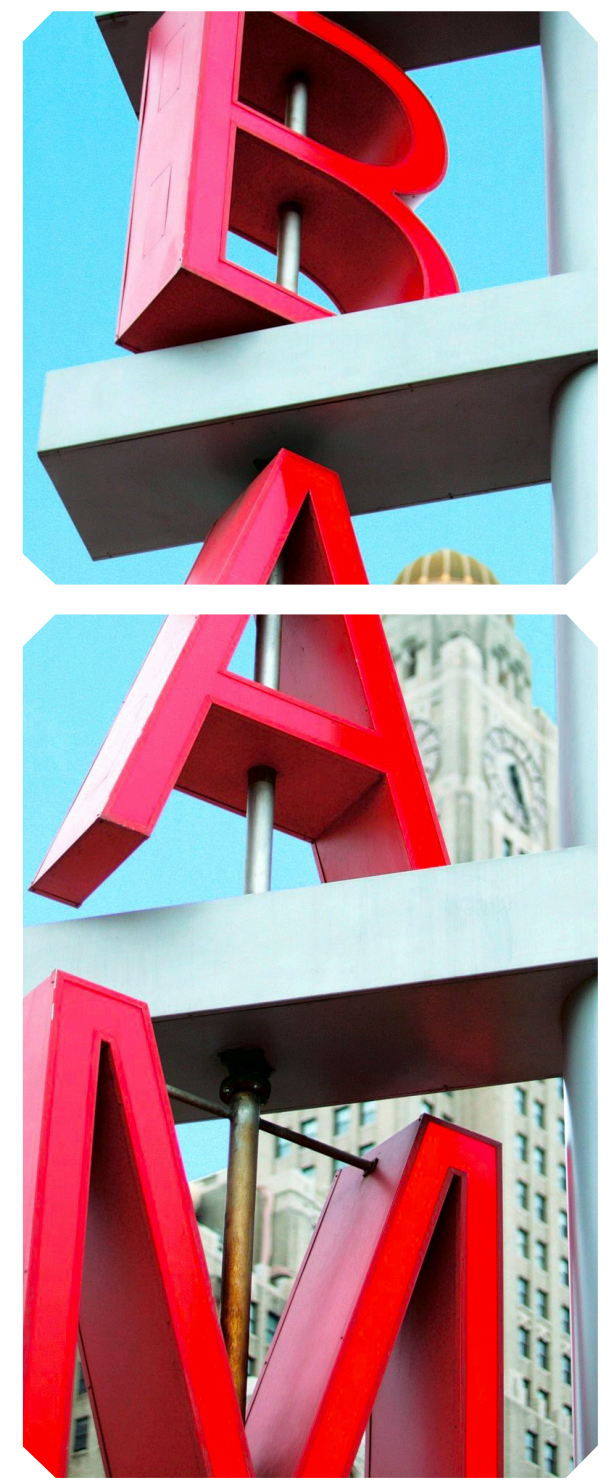
Brooklyn Bridge Park 334 Furman Street | Headquarters of Brooklyn Bridge Park
Over 15,000 sq ft of vacant upper floor space that is ideal for artist studios

Credit: Fantástica

Signaling the Area as a Hub for Creativity and Innovation

After the all the work that has gone into the cultural development of this area – from arts organizations creating unique programming to real estate developers constructing exciting buildings – the marketing of the area cannot be ignored. Ensuring a wide range of people – the public, its government leaders, the arts community around the U.S. and the world – know who and what is here is vital to creating a system that will actively continue to support the arts in the area, especially as the newness of recently created arts venues wanes.

This work will need to chronicle important aspects of the area’s history, its development, and what “Downtown Brooklyn” means today and in the future. Above all, this means distributing cultural programs and stories out across the borough and the city, with an aim of telling people, either directly or indirectly, what this area strives to be.



Credit: BAM

INITIATIVE 9
Ensuring media access and visibility for cultural organizations and activities in the area



As the area continues its rapid rise, it is vital for the sixty-plus cultural organizations in the area to be in alignment as it relates to the area’s identity and their place within it. Led by the Downtown Brooklyn Partnership, the arts organizations in the Downtown Brooklyn area, in concert with other stakeholders, will create unified “talking points,” maps and materials about the area as a whole to be used not only with the media, but applied to current marketing assets including websites and printed matter.

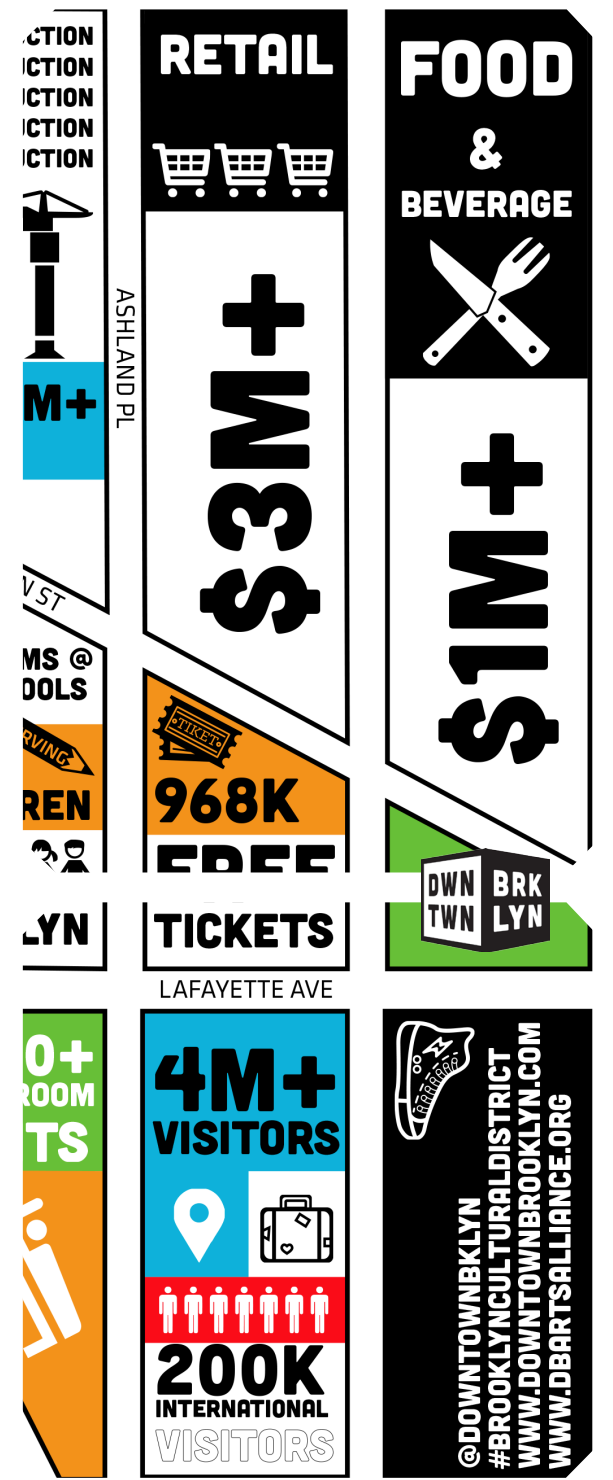
This messaging should be holistic, enabling both larger media engagement and targeted coverage at the community level. It could highlight statistics about the area’s impact and development, as well as new themes and opportunities for visitors and residents to explore over the course of seasons of programming or longer. The work from this initiative should also ensure that appropriate digital efforts are taken with regard to search engine optimization and leveraging social media connectors.

This initiative will be advanced by the DBP, with input from DBAA members.

- ▶ **Initiative Lead:** DBP
- ▶ **Partners / Stakeholders:** DBAA members
- ▶ **Required Resources:** Unique authors & designers, media advisors

...ve • Discaled, Inc dba Mark Dance Group • Encompass New Theatre • Eyebeam • Gallim • Irondale Ensemble Project • Project Room • Modern-Day Griot re Company • Museum of iporary African Diasporan Arts • New blications, Inc. dba BOMB Magazine • rk Deaf Theatre, Ltd. • New York Transit n • Nia Theatrical Production Co. • NY Coalition • Page 73 Productions • Roulette edium, Inc • Target Margin Theater • The Fund of America • The Brooklyn Music School ilians • Theatre for a New Audience • TRILOK I ARTS • UBW, Inc d/b/a Urban Bush Women lass • White Bird Productions

Credit: Fantástica



INITIATIVE 10
Enhancing digital capabilities

The Downtown Brooklyn area, a point on the Brooklyn Tech Triangle, is heavily invested as a focal point of the borough's innovation economy, with startups and tech firms populating its offices. These firms know all too well that digital initiatives do not work as a stand-alone, but instead must be deeply embedded across all facets of their organization. At the same time, digital programs cannot be done on the cheap, making the challenge even greater for cultural organizations operating on tight budgets. This initiative aims to help level the digital playing field by bolstering cultural groups' ability to thrive in this new environment.

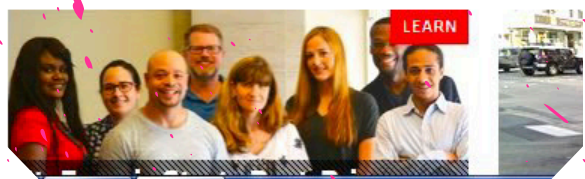
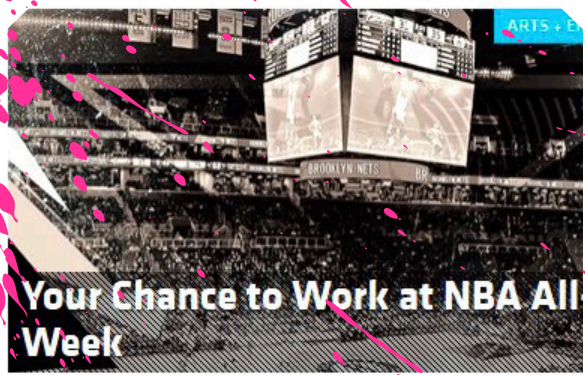
1. **Develop a digital "front door" for culture in Downtown Brooklyn**

With sixty cultural groups spread throughout the area, it is difficult for any visitor to find a comprehensive view of the area's cultural offerings or to provide a single unified home for the groups to present their calendars or information. This will change by creating a single comprehensive site to provide a complete and current view of what's happening culturally in Downtown Brooklyn. Since the development of digital tools takes both considerable resources and expertise, a phased approach is recommended to move toward this objective.

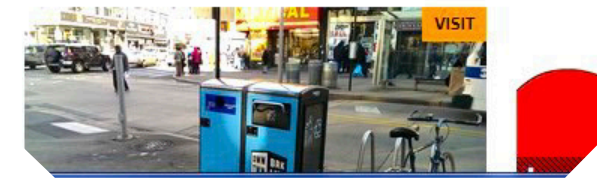
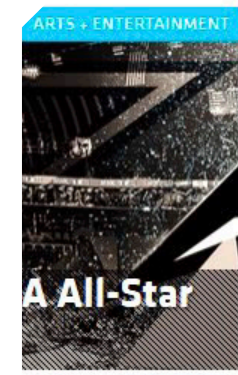
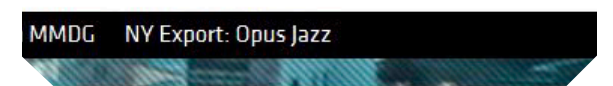
2. **Create a "Digital Advisory Board" for the area**

As proper digital investment not only takes expertise, time, and considerable resources, but also intelligent thought around future opportunities and an understanding of emerging technologies, it only makes sense to engage the best in the business to help plan for that future. Comprised of subject matter experts to provide guidance, connections and insight into future digital initiatives, this advisory committee aims to take a long view to the future needs of the area. While the topics addressed by this advisory board would vary depending on the specific needs that arise, it is envisioned to focus on two primary areas:

10



Credit: Downtown Brooklyn Partnership



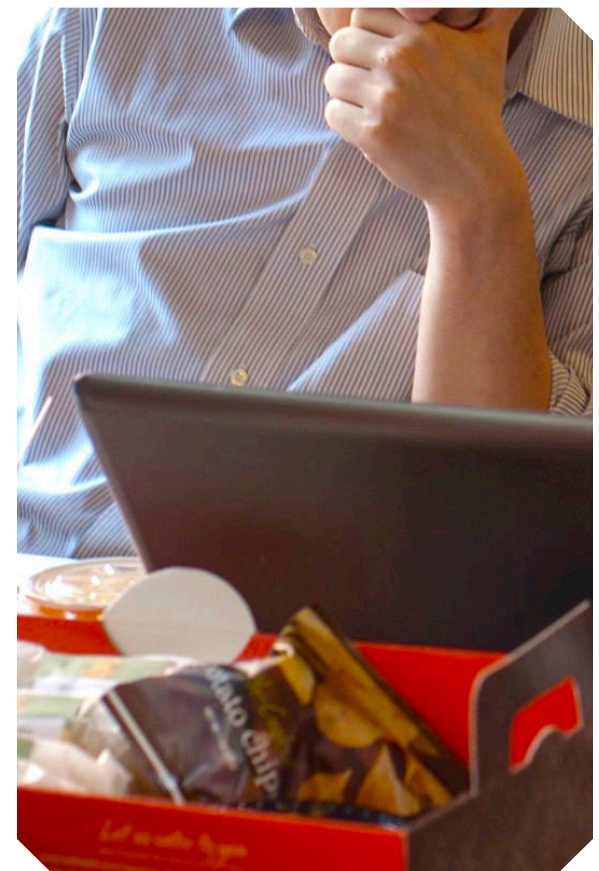
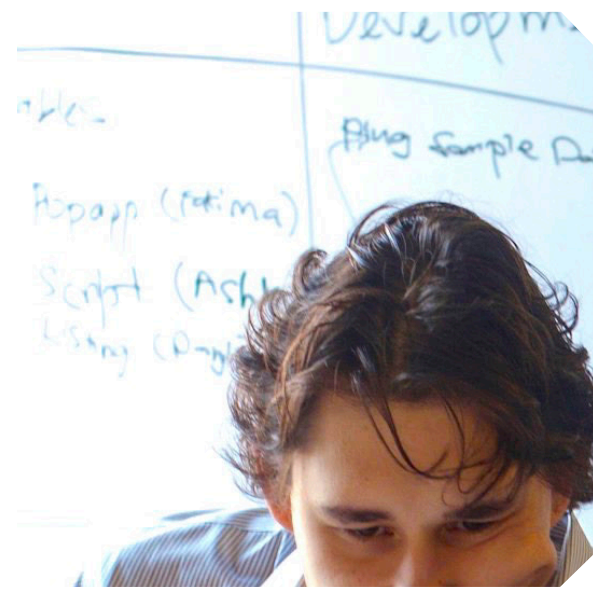
- ▶ Determining opportunities to design and implement innovative digital tools in the area’s public spaces.

These would be developed such that they best simultaneously serve the needs of the public, the many cultural organizations nearby, and the artists and creators working in the area. They could deal with topics ranging from specific “hard” digital infrastructure, such as beacons, projections and smart displays, to softer implementations such as geo-fencing or augmented reality. This provides an opportunity for the area to be both a testing ground for new technologies and process innovation, but also a home for intelligent investment and sound implementation.

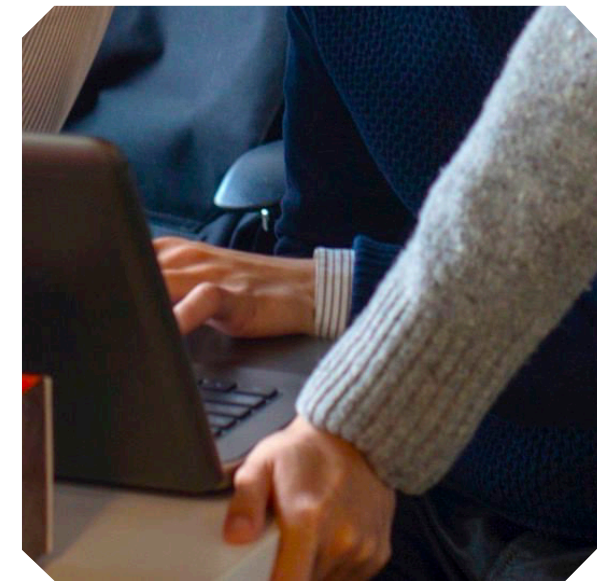
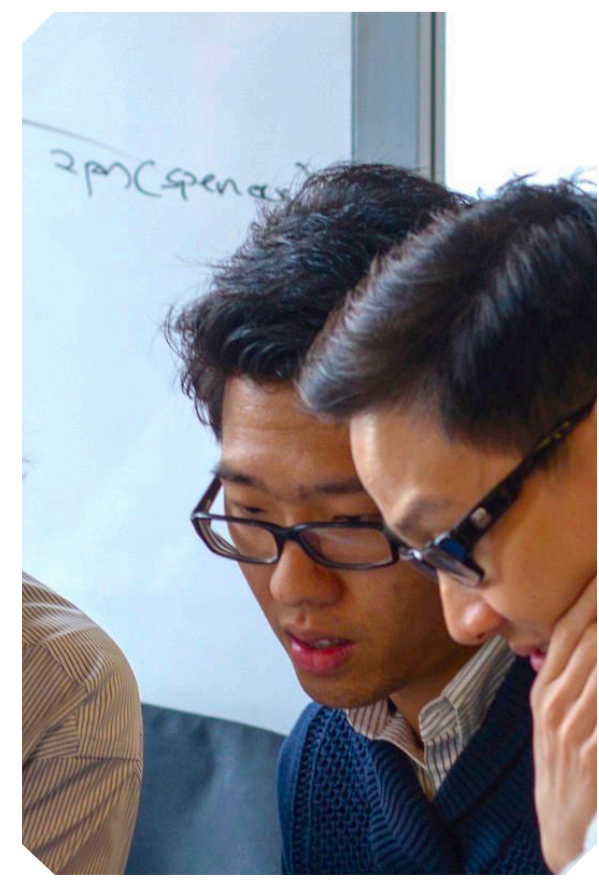
- ▶ Developing a series of digital “best practices” that could be deployed, as desired, within the diversity of cultural groups in Downtown Brooklyn.

There are a range of diverse organizations in the area, all with differing levels of budget and needs for digital investment. These issues could also be addressed in series of workshops that focus on specific technology topics – for example, social media, advertising, web design, or digital marketing – as desired by the DBAA membership.

- ▶ **Initiative Lead:** DBP
- ▶ **Partners / Stakeholders:** DBAA members, area restaurants & businesses, third party information providers (if desired)
- ▶ **Required Resources:** Staff capacity, technology funding



Credit: Fantástica



INITIATIVE 11
Creating and curating linkages
between neighborhoods and
destinations



The many diverse areas of Downtown Brooklyn provide a series of unique experiences; however, they also lack cohesion as physical space. For the many challenges “master-planned” cultural districts present, they have an opportunity to be viewed, at least from a physical perspective, as a coherent whole. Downtown Brooklyn, in contrast, encompasses at least four distinct historic neighborhoods, crosses several major thoroughfares, and includes buildings featuring hundreds of different design vocabularies. Creating one or several “overlays” – through physical and digital means – will provide renewed clarity to the general public as to the many opportunities to engage with arts and culture within the area.

Indeed, while there are pockets of Downtown Brooklyn that have seen wayfinding initiatives implemented, including the unique streetscape at the heart of the Cultural District, there is nothing to date that has provided a clear way of featuring and linking the area’s cultural and historical assets. The many benefits to providing a unifying structure must be contextually appropriate in all locations as a result. While new technologies mean that the tactics to satisfy this initiative can be multiple and varied, physical displays are still the most impactful, providing a sense of accessibility, friendliness and welcome to visitors and new residents.

A constant physical presence allows for spontaneity and more unexpected interactions with the city, and visitors don’t need to worry about either planning ahead or getting lost in unfamiliar places.

To highlight the creativity of the area, information distribution in Downtown Brooklyn should move beyond the traditional sign, instead creating unique and artistic markers that signal the area as a real home for culture. These markers can be responsive to the physical landscape and fabric of each individual neighborhood, designed to fit within the design of each individual streetscape.

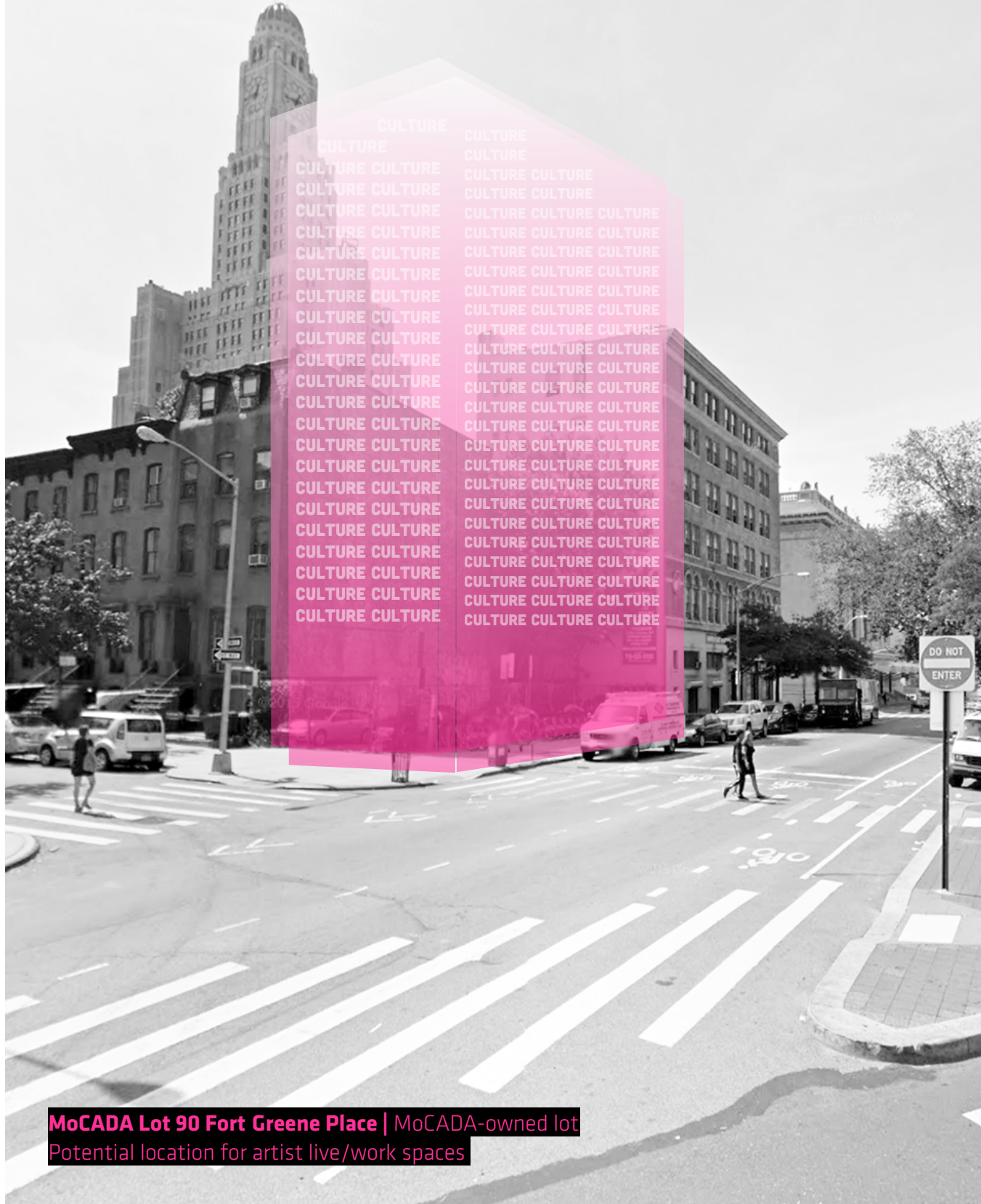
Technology can play a role at this point: the markers should be linked to a dynamic, digital counterpart. These would allow for a greater depth and breadth of information than can be printed on a single sign. A single tap of a finger on a smart phone can bring up a list of nearby activities or zoom out to a more diverse areas and interests within walking distance. They can help a visitor plan an entire day’s worth of activities or provide a window into a rich historical world while they stand outside a subway stop they have never visited before.

This initiative will be advanced by the DBP, with advice and input from DBAA members.

- ▶ **Initiative Lead:** DBP
- ▶ **Partners / Stakeholders:** DBAA, Local BIDs, area artists
- ▶ **Required Resources:** Historical research, funding for creation of markers and online interface, design resources (third-party firm or internal staff), tech developer or staff capacity for application development



Credit: Fantástica



MoCADA Lot 90 Fort Greene Place | MoCADA-owned lot
Potential location for artist live/work spaces

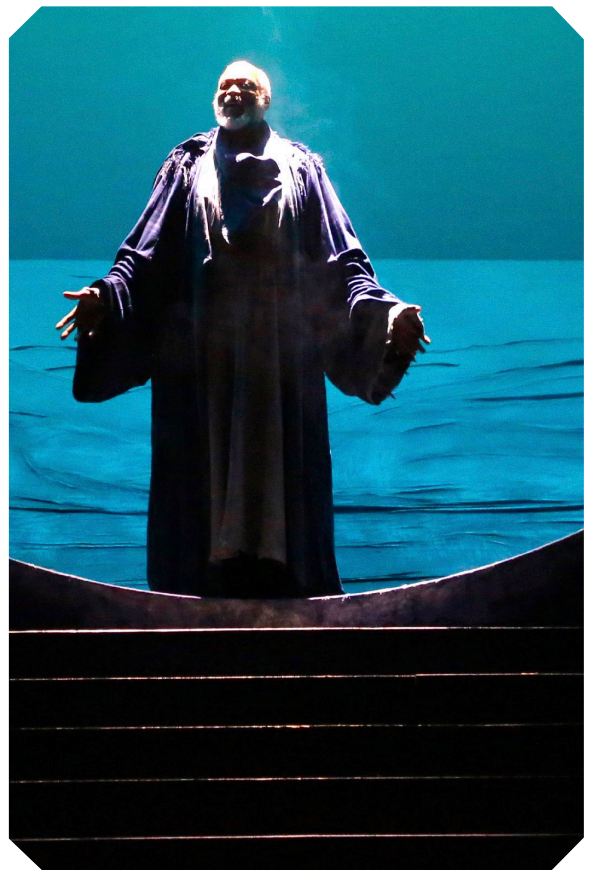
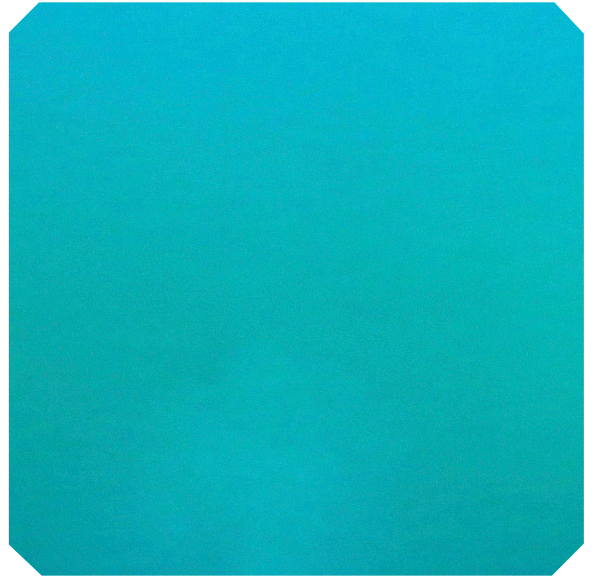
Credit: Fantástica

Providing Appropriate Resources and Governance

Ensuring the execution of the initiatives within Culture Forward will require a close working group of stakeholders in continued alignment and discussion. As indicated through this plan, its execution would be overseen and monitored jointly by the DBP and the DBAA. These organizations will help to generate the needed people-power and momentum, but these initiatives will also require additional funds and appropriate staffing capacity to manage their implementation. These final two initiatives seek to provide the resources to advance this plan in the coming years.



Credit: Theatre for a New Audience



INITIATIVE 12
Building capacity for the
Downtown Brooklyn
Arts Alliance



The Downtown Brooklyn Arts Alliance is a coalition of more than 30 cultural groups organized to connect and serve Downtown Brooklyn cultural organizations, to communicate their impact on Downtown Brooklyn and to actively mobilize in the best interests of artist communities. The DBAA enables collaboration, shares information and provides an effective voice to speak about economic benefits and service of cultural organizations to Downtown Brooklyn and beyond. It also provides an independent voice for its member organizations, who collectively represent the essence of what distinguishes Downtown Brooklyn as a cultural destination.

This initiative would aim to build a more formal organizational structure for the DBAA, and expand its resources, including hiring its first staff member, an Executive Director who would take on much of the coordination of the work identified for the DBAA within this plan.

- ▶ **Initiative Lead:** DBAA member organizations
- ▶ **Partners / Stakeholders:** DBP (in advisory and advocacy role where appropriate)
- ▶ **Required Resources:** Half-time experienced arts professional; Fundraising capacity

“BROOKLYN HAS ITS OWN KARMA.”

KAREN BROOKS HOPKINS



Credit: BRIC



INITIATIVE 13
Creating and fundraising for a Downtown Brooklyn cultural investment fund



This initiative would create a funding vehicle for public initiatives in the larger Downtown Brooklyn area, particularly the initiatives in this plan, targeting unique philanthropic contributors who have expressed an interest in furthering the neighborhood’s public realm. Specifically, this initiative would “prime the pump” for further investment, providing funding for specific programs each year, including those from this plan:

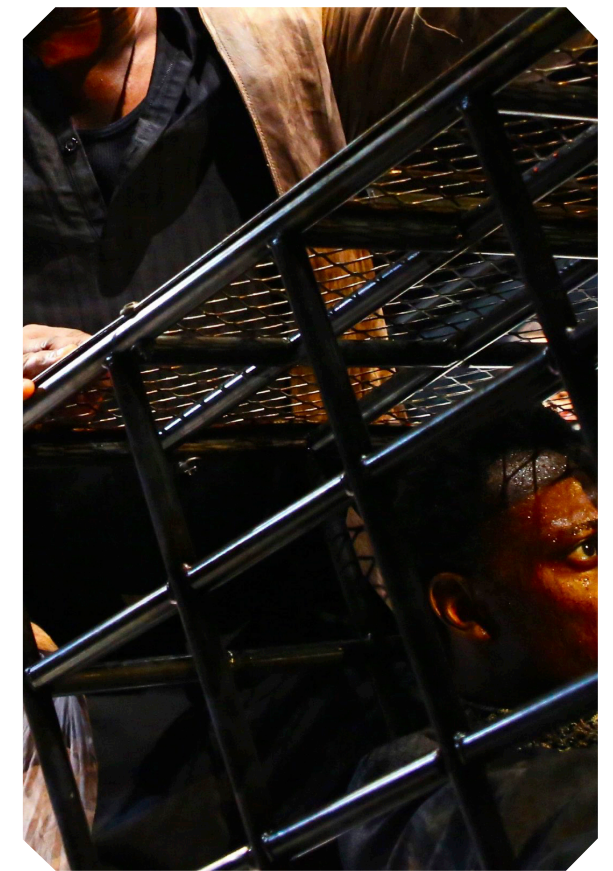
- ▶ **Public art projects (Initiative 6);**
- ▶ **Public performances (Initiative 7);**
- ▶ **Creative signs / markers that feature historic and cultural information about the area (Initiative 11); and**
- ▶ **Strengthening DBAA, the independent alliance of arts organizations in the area (Initiative 12).**

The fund would be held by the DBP, with grant decisions made by a cultural sub-committee including DBP board members, representatives of DBAA, and members of the board committee on programming that is a part of the MetroTech BID Expansion.

- ▶ **Initiative Lead:** DBP
- ▶ **Partners / Stakeholders:** DBAA, DBAA membership (advisory), cultural oversight committee (with public input)
- ▶ **Required Resources:** Fundraising capacity, some staffing capacity to coordinate grant applicants and recipients



Credit: Theatre for a New Audience



CONCLUSION

Brooklyn has an incredible density of cultural activity: thriving performing and visual arts organizations, great museums, and forward-looking libraries, a high concentration of artists and makers, graphic and software design studios, thriving indie and classical music scenes, and a burgeoning set of creative industries embracing new technologies of production and consumption – video, film, gaming, and more. It is a great place to live, to work, and to visit, and globally recognized as such. Its cultural vitality plays a large part in that greatness.

Much of this has happened spontaneously, with creative activity clustering and feeding off itself in exactly the same way that other industries cluster. BAM’s role as an anchor for cultural development has been extremely important, and other DBAA member organizations – some having been in the community for many years, and others being relatively new – have built on and enhanced the unique cultural vitality of the area. But dynamism – in culture as much as anywhere else – is synonymous with change. This area is changing and will continue to change – some 20,000 new jobs are anticipated in the Downtown Brooklyn area in the next decade in addition to nearly 30,000 new residents.

This will, in turn, affect the character of the cultural scene in ways that are both positive and negative, unforeseeable and exciting.

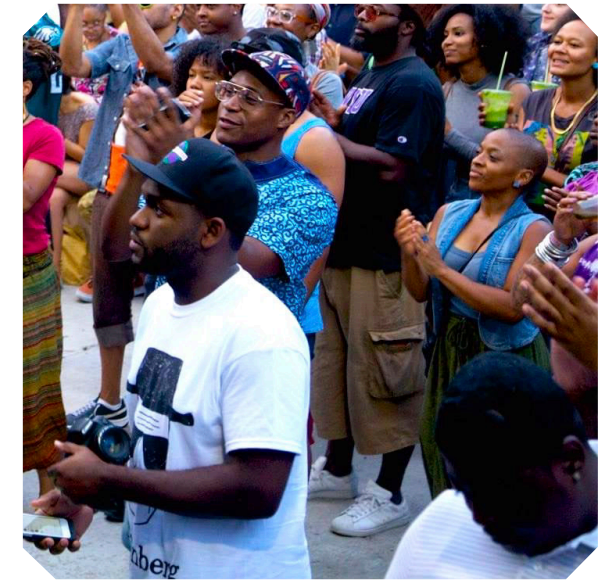
It is important that, as Brooklyn develops, the community has the opportunity to consider the changing role of cultural activity in the character of Downtown Brooklyn, and that thought is given to ensuring that the conditions for vitality and dynamism continue to be there. The creative soil here must remain fertile and nourishing. That is what this document is about: it is not about top-down cultural planning, seeking to preserve the past blindly in the face of change, nor is it trying to chart a specific direction. There will be no handing the future of Brooklyn’s cultural scene over to the vagaries of the marketplace. Rather, it is about trying to identify what is commonly understood as distinctive, what is important, what is most fertile, and finding ways to acknowledge and underpin them.

An important part of successful cultural districts around the world lies in whether the thought has been given to the animation of public spaces through for outdoor performances, smaller scale galleries, live music in cafes and bars, craft studios and maker spaces, informal gathering spaces, educational facilities and how all this links to the surrounding urban fabric. The small stuff that feels like background is as important in a compelling destination as are the more established cultural institutions that create the foreground.

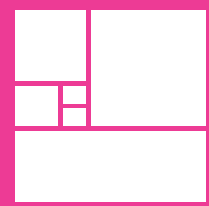
This is particularly true of Brooklyn: the “software” and the infill are as important for, even more important to, success than the iconic and photogenic “hardware”. It takes sensitive planning and supportive economics to attract and retain creative artists and makers, to co-locate production and consumption, and to ensure that streets are appropriately animated. It is our ambition that the work we have done here, in consultation with the incredibly creative residents and workers of Downtown Brooklyn, provides a framework for exactly that.



Credit: MoCADA



Report prepared by:



AEA Consulting

aeaconsulting.com



dbartsalliance.org



downtownbrooklyn.com



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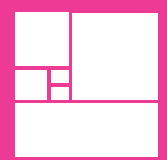
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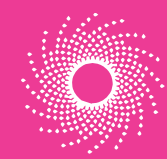
ARTPLACE



Brooklyn
Arts
Council



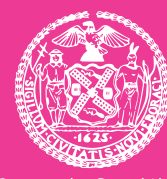
BROOKLYN BRIDGE
PARK



BROOKLYN
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY



Bklyn
Public Library



Community Board No. 2
BROOKLYN, NEW YORK CITY



DOWNTOWN BROOKLYN
ARTS ALLIANCE

Etsy



FANTÁSTICA



Fifth Avenue
Committee

FORESTCITYRATNER
COMPANIES

GOTHAM



Hon. Eric Adam,
Brooklyn Borough President



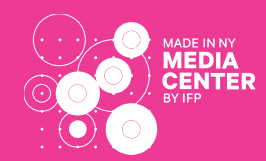
Hon. Stephen Levin,
Councilmember District 33

Hon. Laurie Cumbo,
Councilmember District 35



ISSUE
PROJECT
ROOM

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Brooklyn



MADE IN NY
MEDIA
CENTER
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MoCADA



NY WRITERS COALITION

NEW YORK TRANSIT MUSEUM



Pratt

ROULETTE

SDS | BROOKLYN



StoryCorps

THEATRE
FOR A NEW
AUDIENCE



Management Co. LLC



UrbanGlass

WXY

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**“CULTURE IS THE
ARTS ELEVATED TO
A SET OF BELIEFS”**

THOMAS WOLFE